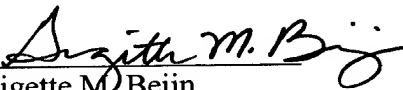


Remarks

The application is deemed in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully solicited. If a telephone conference will in any way expedite the Examiner's consideration of this application, such a call is invited at the Examiner's convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION OF MARKED-UP CHANGES

Kindly replace paragraph 8 on page 3 with the following:

In accordance with the objects of the present invention, an automotive roof rack system is provided. The automotive roof rack system includes at least one storage surface having a first position, generally coincident to the roof of the vehicle, and a second position, generally coincident to the side of the vehicle. The at least one storage surface is movable between the first position and the second position to provide cargo space on top of the vehicle for oversized objects as well as simultaneously provide cargo space along the side of the vehicle.[an automotive roof rack system with improved accessibility and increased flexibility.]

Kindly replace paragraph 17 on pages 4 and 5 with the following:

In addition to the improvements in accessibility, the present invention provides flexibility of use not often found in present roof rack designs. As has been discussed, the present invention can provide more storage on the side portion of the vehicle 16 as well as the roof portion 14. Additionally, by moving the at least one storage surface 20 from the first position 22 to the second position 24, the roof rack system 10 may be more suitable for the mounting of oversized objects, such as skis, boats, or bikes, on the roof portion 14 of the automobile 12. In one embodiment, the roof rack system 10 may further include[s] a plurality of collapsible rails 26, 27, 29, 31. The plurality of collapsible rails 26, 27, 29, 31 when in the raised position [28] (rails 29 and 31 as shown in Figures 1 and 2) provide basket style support for objects mounted on the at least one storage surface 20, 30, 32 (see Figure 1). The plurality of collapsible rails 26, 27, 29, 31 are moveably affixed to their respective hinge bars 33, 35, 37, 39 via a hinged connection to each bar 33, 35, 37, 39. By way of example and with reference to Figure 2, collapsible rail 26 rotates about hinge bar member 33 to free space and remove the roof rack obstruction above the vehicle 12 thereby allowing room for mounting over-sized objects. Accordingly, [W]when the plurality of collapsible rails 26, 27, 29, 31 are moved into [the] a collapsed position such as rail 26 illustrated in Figure 2 and the at least one storage surface 20 is moved into the second position 24 (see Figure 3), the roof portion 14 of the automobile 12 is cleared of any obstructions that may interfere with the mounting of oversized objects to the roof 14 of the vehicle 12. In this scenario, the at least one storage surface 20 is moved into the second position 24 to provide additional storage on the side portion 16 of the vehicle 12 while the

roof portion 14 is cleared for oversized objects. In an alternate embodiment, the at least one storage surface 20 may be left in the first position 22 and the plurality of collapsible rails 26 may be folded down to provide a roof portion 14 cleared of obstructions along the side of the vehicle [(see Figure 4)].

Kindly replace paragraph 18 on pages 6 and 7 with the following:

Although the roof rack system 10 has thus far been described generically, it is contemplated that the roof rack system 10 may be formed in a variety of specific embodiments. [In one such embodiment,] As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the at least one storage surface 20 includes a right storage surface 30 and a left storage surface 32. Although the left storage surface 32 and the right storage surface 30 may be formed in a variety of fashions, in one embodiment, they include a plurality of slat elements 34 positioned mounted between track elements 36. The track elements 36, 51, 53, 55 are hingedly affixed to their respective connecting members 41, 43, 45, 47. Connecting members 41, 43, 45, 47 slide along their rails 38, 57 as shown in Figure 2 [travel along guide elements 38] to allow the storage surfaces 20, 30, 32 to move from the first position [22] on top of the roof into the second position [24] along the side of the vehicle. The track elements 36, 51, 53, 55 may also include securing slots 40 to provide fastening points for securing objects to the storage surface 20.

Kindly replace paragraph 19 on page 6 with the following:

With respect to collapsible rails 26, 27, 29, 31, [The roof rack system 10 may additionally include a left end rail element 42 and a right end rail element 44 mounted on the left storage surface 32 and the right storage surface 30, respectively. The left end rail element 42 and the right end rail element 44], these collapsible rails 26, 27, 29, 31 serve a dual purpose. When the storage surface 20, 30, 32 [is] are in the first position [22] on top of the roof and the collapsible rails are in a raised position, a basket 46 is formed[, the left end rail element 42 and the right end rail element 44 are positioned in conjunction with a plurality of collapsible rails 26 to form a basket 46] on the roof portion 14 of the vehicle 12. The basket 46 helps retain objects stored on the roof portion 14 of the vehicle 12 during transportation.

Additionally, when one of the storage surfaces 20, 30, 32 are [is] in the second position [24] and deployed out and along the side of the vehicle as shown by storage surface 30 in Figure 2, the corresponding collapsible rail (31 in Figure 2)[, the left end rail element 42 and the right end rail element 44] can serve as a base support for objects mounted on the side portion 16 of the vehicle. In other embodiments, however, the collapsible rails 26, 27, 29, 31 [left end rail element 42 and the right end rail element 44] may be collapsed such that they are in a horizontal position and parallel to the vehicle roof to remove obstructions along the width of the vehicle thereby facilitating the transportation of very long or very wide objects. [onto the storage surface 20 when in the second position 24 to minimize the width profile of the automobile 12.]

Kindly replace paragraph 20 with the following:

The roof rack system 10 may further include a plurality of mounting elements 50. Although a variety of configurations are contemplated, in one embodiment the use of three mounting elements 50 is contemplated. It is contemplated that the mounting elements 50 may include latching areas 52 defined by recesses formed within the mounting elements 50. The latching areas 52 may be utilized as a convenient location to attach bunge cords or other securing straps commonly utilized to hold objects on the roof rack system 10. The present invention may further include a locking mechanism 54 for securing the storage surface 20 in the second position 24. [Although a variety of locking elements 54 are contemplated by the present invention, in one embodiment the locking element 54 is a pivoting lock that can remain flush with the side portion 16 of the vehicle 12 while the storage position 20 is in the first position 22 (see Figure 1) and may be swung out to lock the storage surface 20 in the second position 24 (see Figure 2).]